

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MILAN 0788

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: IT, PINT
SUBJ: CORRIERE EDITOR ON ELECTION RESULTS

1. CONGEN MET WITH CORRIERE EDITOR FRANCO DE BELLA ON MAY 17 TO ASK
HIS ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL ELECTIONS AND THEIR AFTERMATH.
HIS COMMENTS FOLLOW.

2. DE BELLA WARMGD AGAINST EXTRAPOLATING THE LOCAL ELECTION
RESULTS TO NATIONAL POLITICAL ELECTIONS. HE TICKED OFF
SIX REASONS WHY HE CONSIDERED THE RESULTS DECEPTIVE IN
MAGNITUDE IF NOT IN TENDENCY. FIRST, THE VOTE WAS PRIMARILY
RURAL WITH FEW INDUSTRIAL CITIES INVOLVED AND MUCH OF IT
WAS IN THE SOUTH WHERE CLIENTELEISM IS A KIND OF WOLD CARD.
SECOND, THERE WAS VITUALLY NO ELECTION CAMPAIGN BECAUSE OF
THE MORO CRISIS. THIRD, THE PCI TOOK A VERY PASSIVE POSITION
MAKING NO REAL EFFORT TO RUN AGAINST THE DC. FOURTH, THE
MORO EPISODE HAD A TRAUMATIC IMPACT ON EVERYONE AND MANY
VOTED DC TO SHOW THEIR SOLIDARITY FOR IT EVEN IF THEY
MIGHT VOTE AGAINST IT NORMALLY. FIFTH, ON THE SATURDAY
BEFORE THE VOTE ON SUNDAY, THE ITALIAN TV WAS SATURATED
FOR FOUR HOURS WITH THE MOST POWERFUL KIND OF DC PROPAGANDA-
THE MASS CELEBRATED FOR MORO WITH THE POPE'S PERSONAL
PARTICIPATION. FINALLY, THE VERY COMMON MAN VOTED AGAINST
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THE PCI BECAUSE THE BRIGATE ROSSE CALL THEMSELVES COM-
MUNISTS AND HE WANTED TO VOTE AGAINST THE TERRORISTS.

3. IN NATIONAL POLITICAL ELECTIONS, DE BELLA ARGUED, THESE
FACTORS WILL NOT WEIGH AS HEAVILY. IN HIS ESTIMATE, THE
TRUE STRENGTH OF THE PARTIES IN SUCH ELECTIONS TODAY WOULD
BE ABOUT FORTY TWO PERCENT FOR THE DC, ABOUT THIRTY PERCENT

FOR THE PCI AND PERHAPS THIRTEEN PERCENT FOR THE PSI. BUT DE DOES NOT EXPECT ELECTIONS UNTIL EARLY 1979. AMONG THE PRESS, ONLY MONTANELLI WOULD LIKE SNAP ELECTIONS, HE SAID.

4. THE MAIN ISSUE NOW WAS SELECTING MORO'S SUCCESSOR. DE BELLA SAID THAT ANDREOTTI WAS TEMPTED BY THE PARTY JOB AND THAT ZACCAGNINI WOULD THEN BECOME PM HE WAS NOT VERY ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT ZACCAGNINI IN THAT POSITION AS HE THOUGHT HIM TOO WEAK. AT THE SAME TIME CRAXI WAS TRYING TO WORK A DEAL TO BECOME PM WITH FANFANI ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC.

5. ALL THIS JOCKEYING RESULTED FROM THE UNEXPECTED ELECTION RESULTS. DE BELLA BELIEVED THAT THE TREND WAS ACCURATELY SHOWN TO BE A DC AND PSI RECOVERY, AND A PCI DECLINE. THAT AND CRAXI'S SUCCESS AT THE TURIN CONGRESS OPENED THE WAY TO LESS DC DEPENDENCE ON THE PCI.

6. MAIN QUESTION IS TERRORISM, HOWEVER, DE BELLA WAS ON PHONE WORRIEDLY DESCRIBING AN ATTEMPT TO SHOOT HIM SOME MONTHS AGO WHILE HE WAS ARRIVING AT MORO'S VIA FANI HOME, AND TO JUDGE BY HIS REMARKS, HE IS SERIOUSLY WORRIED ABOUT BEING SHOT BY THE BR. HE SAID HE WAS SURE THAT THE BR WERE PREPARING A NEW SPECTACULAR THAT COULD INVOLVE MULTIPLE SHOOTINGS.

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7. THEREFORE, HE IS MUCH CONCERNED ABOUT SHAKING UP LEADERSHIP OF THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR. HE ATTACHES LESS IMPORTANCE TO THE MINISTER HIMSELF THAN TO HIS KEY SUBORDINATES: CAPO GABINETTO, CHIEF OF POLICE AND HEAD OF ANTI-TERRORISTS. DI BELLA EXCORIATED THE COSSIGA TEAM AND REPEATED FREQUENTLY HEARD CALL HERE FOR CHOICE OF PREFECTS FOR THE CAPO GABINETTO AND CHIEF OF POLICE JOBS AND OF CARABINIERI GENERAL DALLA CHIESA FOR ANTI-TERRORISM. IN FACT, DE BELLA EXTOLLED DALLA CHIESA AS PERHAPS THE ONLY MAN IN SIGHT WITH THE DETERMINATION, BRAINS, EXPERIENCE AND PROVEN CAPABILITY TO REPRESS THE TERRORISM. MOREOVER, THE PCI WOULD ENDORSE HIM IN THE JOB. DE BELLA URGED THAT THE US USE ITS INFLUENCE TO SUPPORT HIS ASSIGNMENT TO THE ANTI-TERRORISM JOB.

8. IN CONNECTION WITH DALLA CHIESA, WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAPTURING BRIGATE LEADER CURCIO TWICE, DE BELLA INSISTED THAT CURCIO WAS ALLOWED TO ESCAPE AFTER FIRST ARREST, AS THE PRICE FOR FREEING JUDGE ROSSI, THEN HELD BY THE BRIGATE ROSSE. FINA

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